

DJ at Temple University
Health Information Professions (HIP) Career Pathways Program

DJ was employed at Independence Blue Cross for six years as a Workflow Coordinator in the Adjustment Unit. The company downsized, and her department was cut. She was able to obtain unemployment benefits and continuously looked for employment but was unable to find anything in the field in which she had worked. At the HIP program orientation, she was worried about the TABE test because she had been out of school 30 years, but she passed the test and was accepted into the program. She came into HIP on February 28, 2011, and her training ended July 2011. She worked hard and was one of the top scorers in her class.

DJ completed the program and obtained an internship at Philadelphia Mental Health Center. There she got great reviews and did a lot of medical billing. She thought she would be able to work there upon completion but was disappointed when she was not offered a position. She continued to apply online for jobs, attend job fairs, and network with people from her church.

Her job search, which was conducted onsite four days a week at the HIP program, lasted six months. She became depressed after completing applications, going on first interviews, and not getting call-backs, but she decided that giving up was not an option. The program provided strengths-based counseling that focused on DJ's ties to her religion and offered encouragement, a transportation allowance, and a base of support she could trust.

DJ had an interview with H.T.H. Worldwide, a company that identifies insurance coverage and processes health claims for travelers who are leaving or entering the country. When she informed her career placement coordinators about the interview, she was told to think about the distance (28 miles) and the time and mode of transportation that would be needed to commute (1.5 hours each way by public transportation). She was advised to try to find something closer, but she was determined to work for this company if she could.

She was offered a position with H.T.H. Worldwide and told the position was a temp-to-hire based on her performance over a three-month period. The position as a temp did not offer benefits. She accepted the position because she felt her motivation, dedication, hard work, attention to details, and her communication, computer, and organizational skills would help her perform her job responsibilities. These qualities, among others, were factors that influenced her supervisors to give her a full-time position that offered advancement and full benefits.

DJ has been excited about returning to work and feels gaining employment has made her independent and self-sufficient once again. She believes the skills that she learned from the HIP program, such as medical terminology and abbreviations and health insurance claims forms, helped her obtain and perform her job. She was very appreciative of the resources and incentives earned from her studies with HIP that enabled her to get needed work clothing. Her story is one of someone who, reinventing herself through education and training, opened doors that led to success.